



Panhandle News

BENEWAH, BONNER, BOUNDARY, KOOTENAI & SHOSHONE COUNTIES

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Whoever coined the phrase “the lazy days of summer” didn’t live in the Idaho Panhandle. Summer is the busiest time of the year. Look past the tourists strolling and lunching in charming downtowns or playing on lakes, rivers, golf courses and amusement areas, and there are hundreds of people working extra hours preparing food, hosting, entertaining, massaging, transporting, cleaning up after and otherwise serving those tourists. Summer also is the peak period for construction and real estate activity. Employment with the U.S. Forest Service and related state and federal agencies hits its highest point in August when the most tourists are in northern Idaho and fire danger is greatest. In addition, farms are busy throughout the spring and summer from planting to haying in early summer and harvest in August. Unless hoot owl restrictions are imposed because of extremely high fire danger, logging is in full swing throughout the summer and autumn. Other industries that usually reach peak employment levels in late summer include trucking, retail, temporary employment, gravel pits, open-pit mines and wholesalers serving the farm, logging and construction sectors. The only major sector that normally loses jobs during the summer is education. So it is not surprising that the Panhandle almost always adds jobs each month from March through August. Between March and August, it normally adds about 5,700 seasonal jobs — about 1,500 jobs in construction; 1,100 at recreational and amusement facilities; 900 in restaurants; 550 at inns; 500 in retail stores; 400 in logging; 400 in federal, state and local parks and forest management programs; 200 in the trucking industry and 150 in a variety of professional, business and personal services.

About two-thirds of the seasonal jobs added between March and August will

Panhandle Table 1: Coeur d'Alene MSA Labor Force & Employment Kootenai County

	Apr 2006*	Mar 2006	Apr 2005	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
<i>Seasonally Adjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	70,050	69,330	68,220	1.0	2.7
Unemployed	2,460	2,350	2,860	4.7	-14.0
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.5	3.4	4.2		
Total Employment	67,590	66,980	65,360	0.9	3.4
<i>Unadjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	68,990	67,960	67,560	1.5	2.1
Unemployed	2,680	3,110	3,120	-13.8	-14.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.9	4.6	4.6		
Total Employment	66,310	64,850	64,440	2.3	2.9
JOB BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS	54,130	52,380	51,510	3.3	5.1
<i>Goods-Producing Industries</i>	10,760	10,420	9,790	3.3	9.9
Natural Resources & Mining	390	400	350	-2.5	11.4
Construction	5,650	5,360	4,960	5.4	13.9
Manufacturing	4,720	4,660	4,480	1.3	5.4
Wood Product Manufacturing	1,120	1,130	1,000	-0.9	12.0
Other Manufacturing	3,600	3,530	3,480	2.0	3.4
<i>Service-Providing Industries</i>	43,370	41,960	41,720	3.4	4.0
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	9,790	9,600	9,390	2.0	4.3
Wholesale Trade	1,460	1,440	1,310	1.4	11.5
Retail Trade	7,390	7,210	7,100	2.5	4.1
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	940	950	980	-1.1	-4.1
Information	960	990	1,020	-3.0	-5.9
Financial Activities	2,880	2,840	2,560	1.4	12.5
Professional & Business Services	6,140	5,870	5,980	4.6	2.7
Educational & Health Services	5,570	5,540	5,250	0.5	6.1
Leisure & Hospitality	7,000	6,140	6,680	14.0	4.8
Other Services	1,500	1,480	1,450	1.4	3.4
Government Education	3,720	3,800	3,710	-2.1	0.3
Government Administration	5,110	5,030	5,020	1.6	1.8
Government Tribes	700	670	660	4.5	6.1

* Preliminary estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

show up in Kootenai County. That is the same proportion of total Panhandle payroll jobs that Kootenai County provides. Despite great strides in diversifying its economic base over the last 20 years, Kootenai County’s employment continues to be just as seasonal as it ever was. While it has reduced its dependence on agriculture and logging, the county has greatly increased its reliance on summer tourism.

Kootenai County, which is also the Coeur d’Alene Metropolitan Statistical Area, added about 1,750 nonfarm payroll jobs between March and April as Panhandle Table 1 shows. That is about normal.

The county continues to enjoy rapid economic growth, although growth is somewhat slower than the amazing pace of the previous two

years. Nonfarm payroll jobs in April were 5.1 percent higher than a year before. In 2004 and 2005, year-over-year growth rates averaged 6.8 percent. The county's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in March was 3.4 percent, its lowest recorded level. The rate edged up to 3.5 percent in April as cool, rainy weather hampered construction, logging and other outdoor jobs.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Benewah County

- One of Benewah County's three largest mills recently was sold to Portland-based Stimson Lumber Co. Founded by Marc Brinkmeyer in 2001 at the site where the Rayonier mill burned down in 1998, Plummer Forest Products employs 110 people. The stud mill, which is known for its high efficiency, processes small-dimension logs. Stimson Lumber owns the DeArmond mill in Coeur d'Alene and the former Idaho Forest Industries mill in Priest River. Last year, it purchased Hauser Lake Lumber, a finger-joint plant in western Kootenai County, and closed its Atlas mill in Coeur d'Alene. Now, Stimson accounts for about 460 of the 2,800 wood manufacturing jobs in the Panhandle.
- St. Maries Harvest Foods recently celebrated a \$350,000 store remodeling that included new fixtures for the produce department and the bakery/deli, a new scanning system and historical photos of St. Maries throughout the store.
- Voters rejected a \$13.7 million bond levy for the Plummer-Worley School District, which would have allowed it to build a new high school, convert the present high school to a middle school, convert the current middle school to an elementary school and vacate the 68-year-old elementary school that is plagued with leaks and boiler problems. Currently, the high school and middle school are in Plummer while the elementary school is in Worley. The construction levy would have resulted in all the schools being on the same site.

Boundary County

- Tom Williams, the owner of Sandpoint Title Insurance, opened Community Title of Boundary County in Bonners Ferry on May 1.

Kootenai County

- Silverwood, the theme park along U.S. Highway 95 near Athol, added more thrills and chills when it opened for the summer. Silverwood unveiled Panic Plunge, a ride that slowly ascends 140 feet and then plummets. Equally impressive, although less terrifying, is the new Indian camp and bison herd along the railroad track circling the park. Working

with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Silverwood has created an exhibit about Indian culture in northern Idaho. More than 600 people work at Silverwood, the Pacific Northwest's largest theme park.

- Kootenai County recently welcomed several new businesses. A new store in Coeur d'Alene called Northwest Patio & Heating sells bars, firepits and outdoor furniture made from cedar and steel. Christopher & Banks Corp. opened a C.J. Banks store at the Silver Lake Mall in Coeur d'Alene. The store specializes in women's casual, sport and work clothes. Ten years after the first Capone's Pub & Grill opened in Coeur d'Alene, a second Capone's Pub & Grill opened in a 3,800 square-foot space in Post Falls. Boulevard Deli opened in the former Blondie's building, where it sells deli sandwiches, baked goods, ice cream and espresso drinks. It added a drive-thru window to provide fast customer service.
- About 72 percent of voters recently approved a \$10.9 million bond levy for the Post Falls School District. The district will use \$8 million to build a new elementary school near the Montrose subdivision. About \$1.4 million will add eight classrooms to Post Falls High School. To accommodate its growing fleet of 72-passenger buses at its transportation and maintenance building, which was designed for 48-passenger buses, the district will spend \$725,000 on remodeling. The building projects are slated to begin in the spring of 2007 and be ready for the 2007-2008 school year. With its enrollment rising about 3 percent a year, the district has to add a building about every four years to keep up with growth. That is why the district will use the remaining \$750,000 to purchase land for a future school.

Shoshone County

- One of the many condominium projects under construction or proposed for Shoshone County involves a complete remodeling of the Lincoln School building on McKinley Avenue in Kellogg and construction of a building next door. When the renovation and construction is completed in the next year or so, the Lincoln School condominium project will include 44 units.

Kathryn Tacke, Regional Economist

1221 W. Ironwood Drive, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

(208) 769-1558 ext. 3984

E-mail: kathryn.tacke@cl.idaho.gov